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Effective leadership is required for positions of elementary school administration, and this leadership can be acquired and improved. In recruiting for the principalship, the greatest potential source is the teaching staffs of elementary schools. The time to select principals is when none is needed because the administration then has time to gather and carefully evaluate information about the prospective candidates. Internships and school system principal training programs provide effective learning experiences for principals-to-be. Once selected, new principals should not be left to grope for their own administrative style. Programs of orientation, system-wide programs of continuing education, and encouragement of self-directed professional and personal growth are essential to the development and maintenance of effective educational leaders. (TT)

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Effective Elementary School Administration

by

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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EA 002 225

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iv

A Word from the Author . . .

The objective for this book is to develop a publication so practical and useful that it should be on the desk of every elementary principal for frequent reference, and in the personal library of every aspirant to the principalship.

Out of three decades of study and experience in elementary education, the author has selected those ideas that should be of most significance and help to:

- a practicing elementary principal interested in looking at his own job through the eyes of a fellow professional whose vantage point bears some resemblance to his own;
- a student of school administration seeking to balance his study of scholarly research with considerations of *actual practice;*
- a new appointee to his first elementary principalship;
- a principal charged with organizing a new elementary school "from scratch";
- an elementary school faculty interested in examining general practices in the operation of elementary schools as a point of departure for evaluation of its own school;
- a group of elementary school principals in an in-service study of their overall task, or of a particular phase of it;
- a student or teacher considering a career in elementary school administration;
- an elementary classroom teacher seriously concerned about the responsibilities involved in administering schools, as teachers move into a role of greater participation in administrative affairs.

In far too many communities across America, elementary schooling is undertaken in a way that might be compared with mountain climbing—simply because the children are there. Where this happens, administration, teaching, and learning are perfunctory, haphazard, confused, and ineffective.

Americans, proud to be called a practical people, seem terribly self-conscious about theories. "Let the philosophers talk about theories, but let us get on with the job to be done," is a too common attitude. "It's a good theory but it won't work," is supposed to be the kiss of death for a new idea. (Paradoxically, pragmatic people somehow have imagined that a theory can be a good one even if it doesn't work!) Someone has well said, however, that the most practical thing in the world is a sound theory. The principal whose professional actions are motivated and supported by a rational body of theories will lead his staff and community in an educational program appropriate for their children in their day and place.

While philosophers may debate, practicing school administrators and teachers must make daily, and even hourly, decisions. Principals sometimes are tempted to feel that the business of educational philosophy is the special field of persons who lead a more leisurely life than they. Nevertheless, the busy principal is the ultimate philosopher, because in the course of a typical day he may have to participate in making decisions on such varied questions as these:

- Shall a third-grade class be provided a school bus for a study trip to a neighborhood shopping center?
- Shall a first-grade teacher's recommendation for individual learning materials for a small group in her class be approved?
- Shall a pupil transferring from an out-of-state school be placed in the same grade she has been in, or in a lower or a higher one?
- Shall the request of a community organization to distribute promotional materials to pupils be granted?
- While the school nurse conducts a program on menstruation for sixth-grade girls, what shall be done for (or, at least, with) the sixth-grade boys?

The principal does not make these and many other decisions without the guidance of systemwide policies and procedures, nor without the advice of members of his own staff. But, as a member

of the school system's formal or informal "administrative cabinet," he participates in establishing systemwide procedures. As the educational leader of the individual school, he influences the attitudes of its teachers. Moreover, as the local administrator and executive, he bears the final responsibility for determining the application and interpretation of specific policies, precedents, and opinions (including his own) in specific instances.

If the administrative decisions grow out of an informed and rational philosophy, they tend to have a consistent theoretical basis. Because they are consistent, they can be understood. They can be anticipated by staff, by pupils, and by patrons, because they are consistent with previous policies and practices. When challenged, the decisions can be justified, because they relate to significant values. Administration thus becomes not only efficient, but also dynamic and inventive, because the values being served are permanent rather than transitory.

Elementary principals would be well advised not to think that they have no time to consider educational theory and philosophy; ultimately, it may be the most productive time they spend. If the school system does not provide current and pertinent literature, in-service growth opportunities, and time and encouragement for professional study in educational theory and philosophy, principals should make the need for these clear to the superintendent.

Theories and values pertinent to elementary school administration derive from a study of the past—the history of the development and purpose of elementary schools—and of the present. One who would be an effective administrator neglects neither. The literature on the history and philosophy of elementary education is voluminous, and should not be ignored. The chapters which follow seek to guide administrative decisions in the light of present investigations, experimentation, and thought—but always informed by what has happened in the past.

Just as teaching strategies must be matched to the varying learning styles of different children, so school organization and administration must be mated to the particular framework in which a school operates. The function of the principal is to make leadership decisions which relate administrative strategies to his school situation. The principal will find here a discussion of alternatives upon which these decisions can be rationally based.

With an abiding respect for the purposes of the public elementary school, and in the opportunities for effective elementary school administration to contribute to the achievement of these purposes, the writing of this book is undertaken.

Acknowledgments

Many of the past few years were spent by the writer in the Austin, Texas, public schools. He had some part in developing much of the material that is quoted from the Austin school system; he is especially grateful to his former associates there for this material, and more particularly for the experiences it represents. The treatment of material in this book is the author's own, and should not be interpreted as necessarily reflecting the current position of the Austin public schools.

11

The Profession of Elementary School Administration

IN ONE comprehensive study of elementary education in the United States, a survey team visited elementary schools throughout the nation. The schools selected had programs of outstandingly high quality in the opinion of qualified outside observers. Less than a decade later, one member of the original survey team revisited many of the same schools. His general finding was that the schools which retained the same principal they had at the time of the earlier visit continued to offer outstanding programs, adapted and improved to meet changing needs and opportunities. Schools whose principals had been changed in the intervening years tended to be more like other schools near them than like the outstanding schools they were earlier.

Ellwood Cubberley said it well nearly half a century ago: "As

EA 002 225

is the principal, so is the school."[1] Although schools themselves certainly have changed since Cubberley's time, and so have the status and role of the principalship, the essential truth of his dictum still stands. The decades, even the years, ahead doubtless will see accelerated changes in both schools and the principalship, but in the foreseeable future the schools where the principal is a null factor likely will be only those where the principal himself chooses to make it so.

Frequently throughout this book the role of "the staff" in initiating and carrying forward certain activities has been stressed. This is a recognition of the fact that today's teachers do much more than teach. As they are relieved by aides and clerks of some of the subprofessional aspects of their work they are able to devote more time and thought to matters demanding professional knowledge and skill. Not only are they doing this as individuals and as informal groups of teachers, but they are doing it as organized groups through formalized procedures of consultation and negotiation.

The current involvement of teachers in the administrative affairs of schools may be simply the overt assumption of something educational philosophers and administrators have talked about for decades: democratic school administration. Exactly what was meant by those who talked about this was not clear at the time, and it even may be that some spoke of it cynically and hypocritically. Nevertheless, increasingly teachers came to take the idea seriously, and it now has become a fact of life to be reckoned with in the administration of schools. Whether it will take a responsible form that will be to the best interests of the children in the schools remains to be seen.

Most elementary schools still are unaffected by this new and formal participation of teachers in consultation about such matters as salaries, fringe benefits, working conditions, duty assignments, school organization, and other matters. Nevertheless, some elementary principals are finding themselves in roles that are not simply new—they are, for at least the time being, confusing, perplexing, and threatening. However, it is unlikely that the purposes, responsibilities, and operation of the elementary school will become

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[1] Ellwood Cubberley, *The Principal and His School,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923, p. 304.

simpler. On the contrary, all signs point to a continuation of the increase in the tasks that society hands to the elementary schools to perform. This being so, it is doubtful that the elementary school of the future will be presided over by an anonymous chairman, without either responsibilities or opportunities for leadership. The behavior of social groups being what it is, it seems more likely that a person with appropriate abilities, interests, training, experience, and skills will continue to be needed to provide leadership for the school staff.

The position of this book is that leadership is not obsolete in school administration—that school administration requires effective leadership. The thesis of this chapter is that administrative leadership can be acquired and improved. This chapter, therefore, will discuss three topics:

1. Preprincipalship experiences.
2. The care and nurture of principals.
3. Prospect and profession.

Preprincipalship Experiences

When does one begin to be an elementary principal? One answer might be that an educator begins when he starts to accumulate those experiences that fit him especially for his functions as a principal. Who can say what life experiences fit one for such a complex job involving so many facets of human relationships? Whatever contributes, of course, to one's richness of personality, keenness of perception, breadth of culture, depth of understanding, warmth of relationships, maturity of judgment, tolerance of frustration, devotion to principle, response to challenge—whatever, in short, contributes to the life style of effective administrators is part of the preprincipalship experience. But no two successful principals have exactly the same early experiences in just the same combination; these experiences, whatever they are, are too nebulous to offer much help in planning one's preparation for a professional career.

However, there are some events, beginning quite early in life, which help to fashion the background for the elementary principalship.

Recruitment. Perhaps the earliest influence toward guiding persons into the elementary principalship is a successful experience as an elementary school pupil. The chances are slim that pupils from poor elementary schools, whose memory of those schools is marked by frustration, unhappiness, and boredom, will themselves aspire to be elementary principals. But if a child's principal projects an image of one who is successful and happy in his profession, some pupils may come to identify with him and with his profession.

More active recruitment for a professional career begins in the secondary schools, where there are Future Teachers of America clubs. Sponsorship of these interest groups usually is in the hands of teachers rather than administrators. Unless principals become involved in the F. T. A., youth may have little information about and give little thought to careers in school administration. Elementary principals might well identify themselves with F. T. A. groups as a means of calling such opportunities to the attention of their members.

To some degree, the same situation exists in the Student Education Association units in colleges. Generally little is done through these groups to present the principalship as a possible goal to be considered beyond a period of teaching. The result is that many young people do not think ahead toward the principalship as a career until they have taught a few years. Meanwhile, the individual's salary may not have risen as fast as his family responsibilities, especially in the case of young men, and many potential principals may leave the education profession entirely before seriously considering preparation for the principalship.

The greatest potential source of new elementary principals is the teaching staffs of elementary schools, of course. Here professional principals are in a strategic position to spot successful teachers who have the necessary personal qualities and interests that might enable them to become good principals. They can be encouraged to accept temporary delegated administrative responsibilities, to attend conferences of principals, and to take graduate courses in administration. These activities may help them decide whether they wish to pursue a career in the principalship. Not all good teachers should become principals, of course; not all the traits that characterize a good teacher make a good principal.

Selection. Too many school systems follow a collision system of appointing principals: not until the administration is face-to-face with a vacancy is thought given to selecting the next principal. The odds are against the success of appointments made with so little deliberation.

The time to select principals is when none is needed. Then there is no pressure to make a decision by a particular deadline, the administration has time to gather and evaluate information about prospective principals, and the prospects have time to begin a program of graduate or preservice study in administration.

The selection process involves some elements of recruitment. That is, promising potential candidates, once identified, should be encouraged to apply for the principalship position, assuming that the local school system provides a procedure for selecting principals in advance of need. Elementary principals not only have their own staffs to draw upon, but through contacts with other principals at statewide or national conferences the principal can learn of prospects who might be planning or willing to move to his system. Whenever any overtures are made to such prospects, it should be made clear that this is only one in a series of steps that may or may not eventually result in an administrative appointment.

In addition to the usual employment data—interviews, education and experience records, letters of recommendation, formal tests, etc.—a review board sometimes is called upon to aid the superintendent in making the selection. This board may consist of the superintendent or his representative, other central office personnel related to the elementary schools in administration and supervision, and one or two elementary principals and classroom teachers. After studying the applicant's credentials they might conduct a group interview with him. The consensus of these people, familiar with the various facets of elementary school administration, is likely to be more valid than the opinion of the superintendent or of another administrator alone.

Perhaps this is the place to say something about the appointment of men or women as principals. Throughout this book reference has been made to elementary school principals (and to elementary teachers, for that matter) as if all of them were males. That this was a matter of convenience, to avoid frequent use of such awkward expressions as "he or she, as the case may be" doubt-

less was obvious. Nevertheless, some school systems have such a predilection for men principals that it should be pointed out that it is not the intention here to support such a policy. The scarcity of men elementary teachers being what it is, there simply are not enough top quality men teachers to fill all the principalships. To follow a hard and fast rule to employ only men as principals would mean going outside the elementary school staffs to select elementay principals. Experience as an elementary teacher should be considered a basic requirement for the elementary principalship. Furthermore, the high quality of many effective women elementary principals throughout the country is sufficient argument for a non-discrimination policy.

Education. Having determined that elementary principals should have had elementary teaching experience, it is assumed that they will have been properly trained and certified for elementary teaching. Also, it is assumed that before actually becoming a principal he will have completed sufficient special college courses to secure the state certification for elementary school administrators.

Despite recent and current upgrading of the administrative certificate requirements in many states, in too many instances the certificate can be secured by the accumulation of a specified number of prescribed but poorly related courses. The teacher who has been preselected for a forthcoming appointment to a principalship can afford to be more selective about the quality of the administrator-preparation programs in which he engages. Much more to be desired than a conglomeration of disparate courses is the so-called "block-of-time" type course in educational administration offered by several graduate Schools of Education. These programs frequently are set up for an entire summer or a semester. They may be directed by a team of specialists in educational administration, but make generous use of consultants from other disciplines—anthropology, psychology, sociology—and from governmental agencies, educational organizations, state departments of education, and practicing school administrators. A wide variety of learning experiences are planned: community studies, school surveys, simulation exercises, case studies, research projects, and others.

Whether or not the requirements for the state elementary principal's certificate include courses in the elementary curriculum, these certainly should be included in the principal's preparation. In

addition to a course or courses in general elementary curriculum organization and construction, graduate courses should be taken in the curriculum (content and methods) of some of the elementary school subjects.

Internships in school administration and supervision can provide significant learning experiences for principals-to-be. Essentials of a worthwhile experience include adequate supervision by the director of the internship project, assignment to an effective and interested principal, and seminars for the discussion of the continuing experience. Such an internship is a full-time activity. Few teachers feel they can afford to withdraw from teaching for a full year to attend graduate school. School systems which are serious about the preparation of principals select them a year ahead of appointment and allow them a sort of sabbatical or "professional development" leave to prepare for their new assignment. This is especially valuable in the case of principals for new schools. The new principal can relate his study to the planning of the new school's program, selecting staff, furnishing the building, and similar activities.

A preprincipalship training program within the local school district has proven effective in many cases. In addition to preselected principals-to-be, the program may include prospective candidates for the principalship. By involving the latter group it is not necessary to carry on such a program every year, as a cadre of prospective principals can be developed to be available for several years. Several small school systems can join together to provide a more effective program than any one of them could alone.

The quality of the preprincipalship training program is directly related to the resources—time, energy, financial support for consultant leadership, and study materials—that the local school district is willing to put into it. A minimum program would be a series of monthly or semimonthly seminars conducted by members of the local system's administrative staff. Heads of various divisions and departments can acquaint the trainees with the responsibilities of the various areas of school operation. Principals in the system can help orient trainees with problems they encounter in their regular work. While such a program certainly is far better than no preparation at all, it has the limitation of focusing the becoming principal's attention on the status quo, with little challenge to seek more effective methods in local administrative situations.

If the school system feels that it can afford an outside consultant for coordination of the training program, a much more worthwhile program can be developed. Elements of such a program might be the observation of principals in their varied activities; action-centered tasks involving performance of a selected list of principalship duties; research-centered tasks; case discussions; experience as a principal for short periods of time; and frequent seminars for discussion of the participants' experiences.[2]

Principals can be made on the job, after appointment, apparently. Many have been. But effective administration by new principals could be achieved much sooner with sufficient and proper recruitment, selection, and preprincipalship training.

The Care and Nurture of Principals

Too often new principals are treated as if principals were born, not made; they are assigned to a school and left to flounder until they can develop their own administrative style—good, bad, or indifferent. If, additionally, the new principals have had no preprincipalship training, such treatment may be fatal in the sense that some new principals soon despair and either leave the profession or—what may be worse—stay on to become high-priced clerks and custodians rather than effective educational leaders.

Most of the responsibility for on-the-job growth is the responsibility of the principal himself, of course. If the principal is wisely chosen he will have enough energy, initiative, and resourcefulness to contribute greatly to his own self-development. Even so, such a principal can benefit by outside help, especially at the beginning.

Orientation of New Principals. If preprincipalship training is not provided by the school system, some sort of orientation of new principals is necessary if they are expected to be good administrators.

A bare minimum of orientation is a series of meetings with division heads. If this is delayed until just before the opening of the school year little can be accomplished other than acquainting the new principal with the routines of opening school.

Seminar-type sessions can be held throughout the year for the

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[2] Kenneth E. McIntyre, *Selection and On-the-Job Training of School Principals,* Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1960. Chapter III.

new principals. These can be only discussions of the month-to-month problems or, with proper leadership and planning, the principals can be helped to see the wider horizons and opportunities of their jobs.

Someone within the school administrative staff must take the responsibility for the orientation program, as well as for other in-service training programs for all principals. They can hardly be expected to assume the responsibility for allocating time and resources for their own programs. Where principals are directly responsible to the superintendent, he is the one who should see that the orientation and in-service programs are provided. Where the principals are directly responsible to an assistant superintendent (as for elementary schools), this administrator should provide the leadership. In either case, the superintendent or assistant superintendent might delegate the leadership to a division head, such as the director of curriculum or the director of personnel. Again, however, the division heads should not be expected to develop the program, which should not be concerned with the interests of any one division but of all of them. The superintendent or the assistant superintendent for elementary education must provide the leadership if the program is to be taken seriously.

The Principal's Continuing Education. The possible varieties of plans for continuing professional growth of principals are limited only by the amount of creative leadership they have. Perhaps one requisite is that the in-service type sessions be separated from the periodic (usually monthly or semimonthly) sessions in which the superintendent meets with the principals for the consideration of administrative matters. At these meetings the current administrative concerns rightfully have priority. If in-service programs are planned at the same sessions they will be found receiving the time that is "left over," and their significance will be judged accordingly. One plan is for the two types of meetings to be held at the same time of the week or month, but at alternate sessions, with a clear understanding that the two purposes will not be allowed to infringe on each other.

Although the superintendent is looked to for initiating and giving status to the in-service plan, he should not dominate it. His responsibilities are to clear it within the school day on the official school calendar, to protect it from infringement as to time conflicts

and content domination by department heads, to provide it a budget for consultants and study materials, and to organize the first session. If the superintendent will demonstrate this much interest in the program, principals are likely to take it seriously too.

With this sort of support from the superintendent, the program can be organized, planned, and conducted by the principals themselves. The form that the program takes—seminars, clinics, lectures, case studies, research projects, conference sessions, etc.—probably is not as important as the content. The only requirement is that the subject matter be something that the principals themselves identify as relevant and significant. One of the main contributions of an outside consultant can be to help the principals consider and identify significant topics.

Meaningful growth is more likely to take place if a single topic, even a broad one, is considered in depth over a half-year or a year, rather than discussing several topics in an unrelated series of one-shot sessions. Topics may be drawn from several types of sources:

- *Curriculum content and methods:* linguistics, research in reading, inductive teaching, multimedia instruction.
- *Child study:* learning styles, the educationally disadvantaged, children with special disabilities, the "average" child.
- *Organization and administration:* nongrading, multilevel grouping, exploiting advantages of the self-contained classroom.
- *Current local educational concerns:* use of teacher aides, participation in federal programs, preschool education.

It should be understood that when principals participate in the programs described here they are not participating as a principals' organization or association. That, of course, is a proper activity of principals, probably after school hours. But in this case the principals are carrying on a function of the school system itself, as much so as when they are leading or taking part in an in-service meeting of their own staffs. This being so, principals should not feel apologetic about being out of their buildings to attend such meetings or to engage in activities related to them. One such activity, for instance, might be visiting schools in their own or another system to study a particular project or program.

Self-Directed Growth. As indicated earlier, any principal worthy of his appointment has enough initiative, resourcefulness, and self-discipline to direct his own growth as a professional and as a person. That is, the principal likely has these qualities at the time of his initial appointment. The danger is that in the adjustment to the routines of a new job these qualities may be sacrificed as they relate to his own self-growth. Unless the necessary routines are established early in one's career as a principal they are not likely to be established at all, because other responsibilities soon will have crowded out any room for them.

One of the first things a new principal will want to do is to affiliate with his national professional organization, the department of Elementary School Principals, a National Education Association department. Presumably, as an elementary teacher he has been a member of the Association for Childhood Education International. His new duties related to instructional leadership and supervision justify his membership in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All of these organizations have active state units and local units in many cities.

Through the publications and conferences of these groups a principal can learn of the current and forthcoming research and developments in elementary education. Exhibits at conferences and book reviews in journals keep him informed about the latest materials.

The publications on elementary education printed by organizations, foundations, agencies, and publishers each year stagger the imagination. Much of it is repetitious and trivial, but a principal can no more safely dismiss it all than he can try to read everything from even one or two sources. He needs to develop a plan which involves selecting his reading material discriminatingly from several sources, so that he keeps up with the various aspects of elementary education treated from several points of view. Just as he needs to budget funds for professional memberships and books, he needs to budget time for reading. Some of this should be done at home, but the principal should not apologize for being found doing some professional reading at his office during the school day.

If the principals' study group is pursuing a particular topic over a period of time, as suggested earlier, some of the principal's

reading should be related to that. Additionally, he may find it valuable to read widely on some current phase of education until he can feel fairly competent in it.

The personal growth side of the principal, as contrasted with the professional, should be cultivated too. If he went through a recent program of undergraduate teacher education, perhaps half of his courses were in "academic foundations." These were designed to introduce him to the basic elements of a liberal education, but not to suggest that this education was completed upon having taken the courses. Reading, travel, concerts, museums, the theater, hobbies, and other means are available to keep one broadly cultured. One who is not can hardly be expected to contribute much to the acculturation of children under his guidance.

Periodic self-appraisal is a useful technique for professional growth if one can engage in it candidly and objectively. Various publications on the principalship contain evaluative instruments which can be adapted for self-appraisal. A checklist used in one school system for "Evaluation of Personal Competencies and Leadership Qualities" contained these items:

a. *Knowledge:* Do I have the knowledge and educational background necessary to carry out the requirements of my position?
b. *Planning:* Do I think through, carefully and in advance, what I want to do? Do I involve the competencies of others in planning? Are my plans explicit and workable?
c. *Organization:* How effectively do I organize my work as well as the work of others?
d. *Initiative:* How adequate is my ability to originate and develop constructive ideas and actions?
e. *Follow-Through:* Do I carry plans and actions to a successful conclusion?
f. *Decision-Making:* Am I able to arrive at good decisions that are sound and timely?
g. *Communications:* Do I keep my professional associates informed so there is a minimum of confusion and frustration? Are my written and oral communications clear, concise, and thoroughly understandable?
h. *Ability to Motivate:* Do I inspire and challenge those with whom I work?
i. *Ability to Develop:* Do I help develop others so that they become better fitted for great responsibility?

j. *Interpersonal Relationships:* In my relationships with pupils, faculty, parents, and professional associates am I approachable, pleasant, friendly, and respectful?[3]

Prospect and Profession

Jerome S. Bruner has said that "education is in a constant process of invention."[4] Some suggest that the elementary school principalship as an administrative position is in the process of being invented out of existence. This book was written from the point of view that the elementary school principalship will continue to exist into the foreseeable future, wherever there are public elementary schools worthy of the name.

That invention will bring changes in the principalship is inevitable. The role has changed many times since the first head teacher was designated to perform some extra teaching tasks, mainly janitorial. Educational invention also is bringing changes in the roles of everyone else in the school: the superintendent, the curriculum specialist, the teacher—even the pupil, as he becomes a more independent inquirer after knowledge. Change the principal will face; eradication, hardly.

Among veteran educators there is an often expressed sentiment that "the elementary principalship is the best position in a school system." (They do not say "the easiest.") Doubtless part of this is sheer nostalgia for the lost youth of many a professional career. But the number of veteran elementary principals in most school systems attests that this belief is held by many persons still in the position. The reasons for this may recall many of the points discussed in this book.

More than any other segment of the school system, the elementary school comes closest to being the "common school" of all the pupils, which the early visionaries of American public education thought was so necessary in America.

Recent research in human growth suggests that the human intellect reaches half its total development shortly before the begin-

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[3] Irby B. Carruth, "Evaluation of Administrative Performance of School Principals," Austin Texas: Austin Independent School District, Memorandum, May 13, 1963, p. 6 (mimeographed).

[4] Jerome S. Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction,* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 22.

ning of the elementary school period, and that school achievement reaches its half-development about midway in the elementary school years. The human tends to be more receptive to instruction at the elementary school period than at any other.

Belated recognition of the importance of these years is bringing the elementary school increased financial support for new staff services and learning materials.

This recognition also is attracting to the elementary curriculum the interest, energies, and talents of specialists in the content disciplines who have much to contribute to children's learning.

The latency of physical development during the elementary school years tends to make the period relatively free from the cataclysmic physical and emotional changes and drives of adolescence, which divert much of youth's attention and energy away from educational tasks.

The interest of parents and their support of the schools is never greater than during the elementary school period.

For two decades after World War II, a major concern of elementary education was to see that there were enough teachers and classrooms for an annually increasing horde of children. Now that pressure may be relaxed nationwide, although it will remain in some localities. Demographers predict that, despite increases in the total population, for the next few years and perhaps decades, decreasing birthrates will require little expansion of elementary school facilities. Now, perhaps as never before, elementary education may concentrate on qualitative expansion: better teachers, smaller teacher-pupil ratios, new staff positions, more libraries and learning centers, more attention to learning styles—and more effective administration.

One meaning of the word "profession," of course, is a vocation requiring special learning and skill. This is the meaning which this chapter has been about. Yet there is another meaning; "profession" also means an avowal of belief or faith. Effective elementary school administration at its best is, indeed, an act of belief or faith in the importance of elementary education.